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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Summary of the panel discussion on the adverse impact of climate change on States' efforts to realize the rights of the child and related policies, lessons learned and good practices

Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 32/33, in which the Human Rights Council decided to hold a panel discussion on the adverse impact of climate change on States' efforts to realize the rights of the child and related policies, lessons learned and good practices. The Council also requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to submit to the Council, at its session following the panel discussion, a summary report, including any recommendations stemming therefrom, for consideration of further follow-up action. The present report summarizes the panel discussion on human rights and climate change that was held on 2 March 2017 during the thirty-fourth session of the Council.

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I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to its resolution 32/33, the Human Rights Council held a panel discussion on the adverse impact of climate change on States' efforts to realize the rights of the child and related policies, lessons learned and good practices.[1]

2. The panel discussion was chaired by the Vice-President of the Human Rights Council, Amr Ramadan, and it opened with a statement by the Director of the Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development Division of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

3. The discussion provided an opportunity for States, international organizations and other relevant stakeholders to discuss the impact of climate change on the enjoyment of the rights of the child, with a focus on facilitating effective, rights-based climate action through the exchange of knowledge and good practices between expert panellists, States, international organizations and other relevant stakeholders.

4. The panel was moderated by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, Maria Teresa T. Almojuela. The panellists were the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam, Ha Kim Ngoc; the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, M. Shameem Ahsan; the Director of the Geneva Liaison Office of the Division of Public Partnerships at the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Rapporteur of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Kirsten Sandberg; and the founder of the Green Hope Foundation, Kehkashan Basu.

II. Opening session

5. The Director of the Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development Division stated that the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other human rights instruments required action to address the threat of climate change. The Committee on the Rights of the Child had found that climate change was a serious threat to children's health and that it exacerbated health disparities. Climate change increased risks posed to children by diseases, malnutrition, heat stress, natural disasters and displacement, affecting their rights, their well-being and even their survival. With this in mind, it was essential for children to be at the centre of mitigation and adaptation strategies.

6. Climate change also posed a direct threat to children's identities, their livelihoods and their relationship with the environment. From a legal, ethical and moral perspective, when children died as result of preventable, anthropogenic causes, insufficient preventative action challenged the very conception of justice. However, States' current commitments to address climate change were projected to fall far short of the action needed to stay below the 2°C warming limit agreed to in the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and to satisfy their respective obligations related to the rights of the child and intergenerational equity. Each State had human rights obligations to prevent climate harms by regulating environmental practices, to protect vulnerable communities, to hold violators accountable and to ensure redress when harms were suffered.

7. A rights-based approach to climate action also required that children be empowered as agents of change and be ensured an education adequate for them to rise to future challenges. Children were entitled to participate (according to their age and maturity) in decisions that had a direct and indirect impact upon their well-being, including those related to climate policy. For example, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development described children as agents of change critical to the transition towards an equitable, sustainable and

[1] The full video of the panel discussion is available from http://webtv.un.org/meetings-events/watch/panel-discussion-on-climate-change-and-child-rights-10th-meeting-34th-regular-session-human-rights-council-/5343577829001

fossil fuel-free development. Children had already demonstrated their importance as drivers of change in the climate arena. They were increasingly engaged in strategic litigation to promote more ambitious climate action. In *Juliana v. United States*, children had sued the Government of the United States of America, alleging various violations of their constitutional rights to life, liberty, property and equal protection as a result of inadequate responses to climate change. In concluding her opening statement, the Director emphasized the importance of the empowerment, education and inclusion of children for more effective climate action.

III. Summary of the panel discussion

8. Opening the panel discussion, the moderator — the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva — emphasized that this discussion on climate change and the rights of the child was deeply important to her Government. As one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, the Philippines was counting on the effective implementation of the Paris Agreement, including a renewed push towards international cooperation to ensure effective mitigation and adaptation efforts. Climate change would increase both the frequency and the intensity of natural disasters, which were estimated to affect the lives of 250 million people worldwide each year, half of them children. The Philippines alone had recorded 274 disasters from 1995 to 2015, affecting 130 million people. Between 2007 and 2011, 10.8 million students in the Philippines had been affected by disasters, and 8,472 schools had been used as evacuation centres. In mid-October 2015, Typhoon Lando had displaced 1 million people, and had damaged 803 schools which were closed for an average of two weeks. One hundred and thirty-eight schools had been used as evacuation centres. Those disasters had also resulted in damage to socioeconomic and cultural infrastructure, further affecting the basic human rights of children. The Philippines had sought to highlight the link between climate change and the enjoyment of human rights by developing environmental policies that directly addressed and protected children's rights, such as its Climate Change Act of 2009. The country's Commission on Human Rights had also recently accepted a petition against 47 "carbon major" companies, which accused them of breaching millions of people's fundamental rights. The Commission called for an investigation into the human rights implications of climate change and the accountability of major polluters.

A. Contributions of the panellists

9. The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam stated that there were many challenges to addressing the negative impacts of climate change on children's rights. For developing countries, inadequate resources, weak infrastructure and limited forecasting capacity all made it harder to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change on persons in vulnerable situations, including children. There was insufficient awareness of how climate change affected children's rights. Over half a billion children — in total, 23 per cent of the world's children — lived in extremely high flood-occurrence zones. Nearly 160 million children lived in high or extremely high drought severity zones. In Viet Nam, drought and salinization caused by the longest period of El Niño in history had affected more than 500,000 children in the previous year.

10. Child-centred climate policies were needed. The Government of Viet Nam had adopted its National Strategy on Climate Change 2012-2020 and its National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2020, both of which underlined the significance of addressing negative climate impacts on children and provided frameworks for provinces to build their own plans. Those plans included comprehensive childcare and protection measures at all stages, and prioritized prevention. Viet Nam was also giving climate change communication a renewed focus in the potential development of a child-centred programme on disaster risk reduction for 2017-2021.

11. The Deputy Minister called for more efforts to improve awareness of climate change and its impacts on children. This required raising climate literacy through various means,

including through schools, the media, music festivals, television shows and the organization of workshops. In Viet Nam, climate change awareness was integrated into national curricula. Once children and adults understood climate change and its impacts on children, child-centred climate policies would follow. There was also a need to enhance international cooperation on climate change, with a focus on addressing negative impacts on children and on mainstreaming children's rights. The Deputy Minister concluded by calling upon the United Nations to lead international studies on the impact of climate change on children and thanking the United Nations for its invaluable assistance and support to Viet Nam during the previous year's El Niño episode.

12. The Permanent Representative of Bangladesh observed that the human rights and climate change nexus had been well elaborated in previous panel discussions at the Human Rights Council. The poorest in societies were the most vulnerable to harmful effects from climate change, with the children among them being particularly vulnerable. Climate change harmed the natural system, subsequently disrupting associated social, economic, cultural and political systems. Increased numbers of natural disasters, changes in rainfall patterns and sea level rise contributed to drinking-water and sanitation crises, the spread of communicable and non-communicable diseases, severe malnutrition, school dropouts, forced labour, and loss of life and livelihoods. Addressing the impacts of climate change required substantial public expenditures in related sectors. Climate change, therefore, severely constrained the capacity of States to ensure children's rights, including those to health, social security, education, protection from economic exploitation, and life.

13. The social impact of climate change on low-lying developing States could cause conflict, violence, and even mass displacement. Inadequate responses to cumulative weather-related losses and damage to lives, natural resources and livelihoods threatened more instability, with children being affected the most. Climate change would impede efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (particularly Goals 2, 3, 4, 8, 11, 13 and 16), harming most those countries that had contributed the least to climate change, which included Bangladesh. Urgent and ambitious climate action was critically needed to address that challenge. It was clearly stated in the Paris Agreement that when taking climate action, States should respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, thereby establishing a basis by which all States should undertake rights-based climate action including with regard to adaptation, mitigation, finance, transfer of technology and capacity-building. Hence, the Paris Agreement offered a clear opportunity to make all climate decisions in the best interests of the child.

14. At the national level, Bangladesh had implemented its plan of Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions, under which the Solar Homes Programme, inter alia, had been established. That programme provided off-grid electricity access to rural areas and had extended the length of study time for children. Bangladesh also hoped to scale up the use of solar irrigation pumps and of solar mini and nano grids to improve access to electricity and increase agricultural productivity, thereby, also promoting food security for children. These were mitigation measures, with adaptation co-benefits that responded to children's needs. The country's Climate Change Strategy on Adaptation had been similarly designed to take into account the needs and vulnerability of children, for example by using cyclone shelters as makeshift schools during disasters.

15. The Permanent Representative suggested some possible entry points for further action under the Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC, calling upon States to keep children's rights in focus when preparing and submitting their intended nationally determined contributions; to raise the ambition of their mitigation efforts; to ensure a loss and damage system that responded adequately to human rights obligations and particularly to children's rights; and to address the protection of children in the work of the task force on displacement established under the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage Associated with Climate Change Impacts. Furthermore, he called upon States to ensure responsible conduct by businesses, not only in the area of emissions reductions but also in making resources available for climate adaptation to protect children's rights. Linking the outbreak of various communicable and non-communicable diseases due to climate change, he also underlined that States might take advantage of the latest amendment to the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) with regard

to affordability of medicines, in order to better realize the right to health of children and reduce child and maternal mortality. In order to protect children's rights from climate change, States needed to mobilize political will and action to realize the objectives of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

16. The Director, Geneva Liaison Office, Division of Public Partnerships, United Nations Children's Fund observed that climate change represented one of the most fundamental threats facing the world's children and future generations. Climate change affected children's rights, including their access to food and water, their health and development, their education and even their very survival, in a number of ways. Climate change had affected precipitation patterns and increased the frequency and intensity of hydrometeorological events, threatening the 500 million children living in flood-prone areas, the 160 million children exposed to severe droughts and the 115 million children at high risk from tropical cyclones. Disasters had an adverse impact on a whole range of other children's rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It was, for example, linked to increased risk of psychosocial trauma, separation, exploitation and other child protection issues. Children from poor families were most at risk, since the poorest families tended to settle in areas more exposed to the adverse effects of climate change.

17. Climate change also exacerbated the spread of vector-borne diseases, a major cause of mortality for children under 5 years of age, and malnutrition, which accounted for 45 per cent of child deaths. Malnutrition and undernutrition in the first two years of life could also lead to irreversible stunting, affecting both the physical and the cognitive development of children, with resulting long-term implications for development. Furthermore, air pollution associated with fossil-fuel consumption contributed to pneumonia and other respiratory diseases. Around 300 million children lived in areas with toxic air that was six times below minimum air-quality standards. Air pollution contributed to around 600,000 deaths annually of children under 5 years of age. As a whole, children were more affected by climate change than adults due to their less developed physiology and immune systems, and they were at their most vulnerable during their first years of life.

18. The UNICEF representative emphasized that there was no time to waste with regard to protecting the rights of millions of children living in regions afflicted by rapid- and slow-onset disasters and toxic air pollution. The recognition of human rights and children's rights in the Paris Agreement was a major step in the right direction. Additionally, the urgent need to protect children and their rights in the context of climate change was emphasized in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and in the Sustainable Development Goals. However, those words needed to be put into action, and the impacts of climate change on the enjoyment of children's rights needed to be further assessed to better inform that action. Urgent action was needed to limit global temperature rises to 1.5°C or lower, to improve energy efficiency, to phase out the use of fossil fuels and to transition to sustainable energy. Investments should also be channelled into building disaster-resilient health-care facilities, schools, and water and sanitation systems.

19. Finally, children of different ages, gender and social backgrounds should be allowed to participate in climate policymaking. Climate change education could empower educators, parents and children as agents of change in their own communities. Children's views and specific needs should be sought out, heard and acted upon, with children included in the development of international and national climate policies and actions. In concluding, the UNICEF representative called on Governments, the business sector and key stakeholders to clarify the actions required in order to achieve a safe, clean and sustainable environment and to integrate issues related to the human rights impacts of climate change and of climate action into their reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

20. The Rapporteur of the Committee on the Rights of Child described how the Committee's day of general discussion on the environment in 2016 had identified three categories of obligations, namely substantive obligations of mitigation and adaptation, procedural obligations, and heightened obligations for persons especially vulnerable to environmental harm, including children. Climate change threatened the best interests of children as well as nearly all of their substantive rights, including the rights to life, survival and development, to rest, leisure and play, to cultural life, to health, to an adequate standard of living, to housing, to food, to water and sanitation, to education, to identity and to

equality. Climate change, by aggravating existing inequalities in the use of and access to productive land and freshwater, could also contribute to violent conflicts, exploitation and large-scale migration or displacement. It posed an existential threat to indigenous children, due to their close relationship with the environment. A child rights-based approach to climate change was urgent and required that States take into account the rights and best interests of the child, especially the right to life, survival and development.

21. Relevant procedural rights affected by climate change included the rights to information, to environmental education and to participation. Children depended on information on climate change and its impacts to make choices and to exercise their rights to freedom of expression and to participation, in relation to environmental matters. Education played a significant role in empowering children to become actors of change and should include a clear, comprehensive and frequently updated climate change curriculum. That curriculum should reflect different local contexts, and should include information relevant to every child's respective situation and, as appropriate, traditional knowledge. Target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals offered guidance by calling upon States to ensure that all learners acquired the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including through education for human rights.

22. Particular regard should be given to children with disabilities, children from indigenous groups and other children in vulnerable situations, as they may be disproportionately impacted by climate change. It was important that they, like all children, be treated as agents of change and active participants in climate action. Target 13.B of the Sustainable Development Goals clearly indicated a need to "promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries … including focusing on … youth". In concluding, the Committee on the Rights of the Child rapporteur called for policies and mechanisms to be developed to involve children and young people in climate decision-making at the local, national and international levels.

23. The founder of the Green Hope Foundation described her work and her motivation, as an environmental activist at only 16 years of age. She observed that climate change added another dimension to human suffering and was the harshest reality of our time. Polar ice caps were melting, sea levels were rising, typhoons and hurricanes were wreaking havoc, forest fires were choking our skies and fossil fuel-driven economies were turning our cities into veritable gas chambers. Climate change impacted children's rights to life, to health, to education, to food and to shelter.

24. Yet, many had sought to trivialize the issue and its importance, in spite of drastic changes including widespread climate-induced displacement. Millions of people, including many children, had been forced by floods, droughts and rising sea levels to migrate from their homes and countries under uncertain circumstances that increased their risk of exploitation. Climate change also contributed to the burden of disease among children. Its impacts were estimated to be responsible, worldwide, for approximately 2.4 per cent of cases of diarrhoea and 6 per cent of cases of malaria. The impacts on girls were even worse, as girls had to fight against the additional dimension of gender discrimination in the face of disasters.

25. The Green Hope Foundation founder indicated that such situations were inspiring young people such as herself to speak out. As citizens of tomorrow, children had a leadership role to play in shaping the future. The Green Hope Foundation provided a platform for young people to come together and take action on climate change. It had grown into a multiregional organization with a management team comprised solely of children and over a thousand active volunteers fighting to promote climate justice, protect biodiversity, stop land degradation, encourage sustainable consumption and achieve gender equality. The Foundation organized "environment academies", which were tailor-made workshops and conferences conducted "by youth, for youth". It had also established partnerships not just within civil society but also with government utility bodies and with corporates. The Green Hope Foundation founder recognized that climate change posed the greatest threat to children's survival. For that reason, she was particularly grateful to have been given the opportunity to speak up for child rights in relation to climate change at the Human Rights Council.

B. Interactive discussion

26. Interventions were made during the plenary discussion by representatives of Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Benin, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Canada (on behalf of the Francophone countries), Chile, China, Costa Rica (on behalf of the Geneva Pledge for Human Rights in Climate Action), Egypt, El Salvador (on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States), Ethiopia, the European Union, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ireland, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, the Federated States of Micronesia, Morocco, Myanmar, Pakistan (on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation), Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Spain, Tonga, Tunisia (on behalf of the African Group) and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

27. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations spoke: CIVICUS — World Alliance for Citizen Participation, the Friends World Committee for Consultation, the International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations, the Centre indépendant de recherches et d'initiatives pour le dialogue, International-Lawyers.Org and the Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice delle Salesiane di Don Bosco (in collaboration with VIDES Internazionale).

28. A number of other participants requested the floor during the panel discussion but were unable to deliver their statements owing to a lack of time. These included representatives of the following States: Botswana, Ecuador, Fiji, Haiti, Libya, Madagascar, Maldives, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Paraguay, Peru, South Africa, Sudan, Togo and the United Arab Emirates; and of the non-governmental organizations China NGO Network for International Exchanges, the International Council Supporting Fair Trial and Human Rights, the Khiam Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Torture and the Ma'arij Foundation for Peace and Development.

29. Speakers agreed that climate change negatively affected a broad array of children's rights and hampered State efforts to respect, promote, protect and fulfil human rights for all children. Specific examples were raised of climate change and its impacts on the enjoyment of children's rights to life, health, food, education, development, and water and sanitation, among others. It was observed that children under the age of 5 were the worst affected by climate change and associated increases in the incidence of diarrhoea, malnutrition, malaria, dengue fever and other causes of child morbidity and mortality. Children were also more vulnerable than adults to intense ultraviolet radiation, inadequate shelter and indoor air pollution. In addition, climate change disrupted children's right to education through, inter alia, school closures and damage caused by natural disasters, displacement and associated impacts. Destruction of infrastructure and related socioeconomic losses also impacted children's rights and State efforts to fulfil them.

30. Speakers emphasized that while all children were disproportionately impacted by climate change, children in vulnerable situations and future generations were impacted even more, which constituted a clear injustice. Those most affected by climate change had contributed the least to its making. They included girl children, children living in poverty, indigenous children, displaced children, children separated from their families, children with disabilities, and children living in and reliant upon geographically or ecologically vulnerable areas, such as arid regions, high mountains, islands and other coastal areas, forests and so on. Several speakers expressed their concern about the immediate impact of climate change on small island developing States and other climate-vulnerable States. They urged that the interests of children be put at the centre of climate-change policy responses in those States, which were already feeling the impacts of climate change, such as sea level rise, coastal erosion and intensified natural disasters.

31. It was emphasized that in climate-vulnerable States, climate change posed a contemporaneous threat to inhabitants' rights to life, survival and development, among others. The rights and opportunities of children living in those States were severely affected by the struggle for survival in their places of origin. Beyond threatening their physical well-being, climate change posed a threat to children's cultural identity and to the preservation of their connections with the natural environment.

32. Speakers also emphasized the importance of gender equality in all climate action, noting that women and girls were disproportionately impacted by climate change, including natural disasters. One speaker called for gender and social inclusion considerations to be taken into account in all climate change and disaster risk management policies, projects and planning processes.

33. Speakers also welcomed the Paris Agreement, with its explicit reference to human rights, including the rights of children. The Paris Agreement had reaffirmed that States had human rights obligations related to climate change. It was observed that businesses also had responsibilities related to addressing the impacts of climate change on the enjoyment of children's rights and that there was a need to ensure access to remedy when children's rights were violated. Speakers called for every effort to be made to ensure the successful rights-based implementation of the Paris Agreement. They also highlighted the links between climate change, human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It was emphasized that climate change threatened the implementation of development goals at all levels. In that regard, it was important to link up the actions, positions and processes related to the UNFCCC, the Human Rights Council, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework in order to ensure effective and concerted progress towards sustainable development that benefited all persons.

34. One speaker reiterated the call for the Human Rights Council to appoint a special rapporteur on human rights and climate change to facilitate efforts to make these critical links and in order to better understand the impacts of climate change on the enjoyment of all human rights. Another speaker emphasized the role of the Geneva Pledge for Human Rights in Climate Action in bringing together the human rights and climate communities. Along these lines, it was also suggested that greater intersectoral cooperation was needed among government agencies and other stakeholders at the national level. All stakeholders could make further efforts to integrate climate change-related human rights issues within the universal periodic review of the Human Rights Council.

35. Many speakers called for the enhancement of child participation in decision-making and highlighted the importance of education to empower children as agents of change. This was necessary in order to prepare children to address future challenges concerning climate change and the preservation of the environment. Some delegations outlined their own national policies for educating and raising awareness among children about climate change and its effects. These included integrating teaching on climate change mitigation and sustainable development into national school curricula, creating local and national participatory mechanisms for collaborative ecological actions and engagement of children, building networks of schools concerned with the environment, promoting gender equality in climate action, developing national action plans and strategies aimed at ensuring youth and child engagement on climate change, enhancing socioeconomic development in order to improve the quality of life of current and future generations, and establishing environmental education centres.

36. Speakers also called for increased international cooperation to promote a rights-based approach to mitigation and to adaptation to the negative effects of climate change. Action was needed in order to build capacity in developing countries, including through the transfer of technology. Some said that until financial pledges to address climate change were met, climate change would continue to affect generation after generation. They called for international solidarity in pursuing urgent climate action in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. Many delegations described international cooperation to address climate change as being an integral part of their foreign policy and development strategies. The importance of sharing effective measures to combat the negative impacts of climate change on children's rights was emphasized.

37. Speakers put a number of specific questions to the panellists, asking them, inter alia, to share good practices in addressing the negative impacts of climate change on the rights of the child; to describe the potential role of child-centred policies in climate action; to elaborate on methods for mainstreaming human rights and specifically rights of the child in climate change adaptation and mitigation; to address how children's right to remedy could be strengthened, including through UNFCCC principles and taking into account the transboundary effects of climate change caused by the failure of States to comply with their

climate change obligations; to describe how social media could be used to disseminate climate change-related information; to identify critical steps to be taken at the international level to address the specific challenges that climate change poses to the protection of children's rights in developing countries; and to outline the basic actions needed to safeguard children's rights and promote intergenerational equity.

C. Responses and concluding remarks

38. During and after the interactive discussion, the moderator gave panellists the opportunity to respond to questions and to make concluding remarks. She observed that there was a common concern among States regarding the impacts of climate change on children's rights. With regard to her own country's actions on this issue, she stated that the Philippines had adopted and implemented emergency relief policies that had established child- and women-friendly transitional shelters for orphans and for separated and unaccompanied children; called for heightened surveillance work against child trafficking during disaster and post-disaster situations; developed a system to restore and reconstruct lost documentation in the aftermath of disasters; promoted child-responsive training programmes for community school personnel, for rescuers and for disaster responders; improved guidelines to reunite separated children with their families and relatives (a frequent issue on the ground); and involved children in disaster risk reduction planning and post-disaster needs assessments. She directed several questions that had been raised during the interactive dialogue to the panellists, asking them to consider, in particular, the role of the Human Rights Council with regard to protecting children's rights from the negative impacts of climate change, how the Council could promote a more harmonized approach between all actors, and how to best ensure that State obligations to protect children's rights in the context of climate change were met at the international level.

39. The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam emphasized the need to build a climate-literate generation — through child-centred climate change policies, engaging families, schools and communities in children's climate education, and encouraging child participation in climate processes. Vietnamese climate policies were child-centred, encouraged stakeholder engagement at the national and international levels and kept children informed about climate change through television programmes and other media platforms. He also noted that international cooperation, and support from the United Nations, were both critical to addressing the adverse impacts of climate change on children's rights. Viet Nam had enjoyed effective support and cooperation from the United Nations with regard to researching and assessing climate impacts on children's rights, awareness-raising efforts, and disaster risk reduction for children. Work had been undertaken in collaboration with different government ministries to assess climate impacts on children's health, on their education and on their access to social services. The United Nations, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, had worked to integrate climate change into school curricula across all ages. Viet Nam had also worked alongside United Nations agencies, particularly UNICEF, to develop a disaster risk reduction programme. Generally, this type of cooperation was critical to State efforts to pursue a sustainable, rights-based approach to climate change.

40. Citing an example from his own country, the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh emphasized the need to share best practices. The city of Rajshahi, Bangladesh, had gone from being one of the most polluted cities in the world to achieving a 67.2 per cent reduction of some forms of harmful pollutants by sending engineers to cities around the world to seek out best practices to reduce fossil fuel consumption. Among other things, they replaced fossil fuel-based transportation systems with sustainable ones and undertook afforestation programmes. The Permanent Representative also addressed State responsibilities at the international level, including implementation of the Paris Agreement. He noted that States should be conscious of the importance of awareness-building, which increased public pressure on leaders to do the right thing. National legislatures needed to be aware of climate issues and better understand the relationship between human rights, a healthy environment and development. In that respect, the Permanent Representative

welcomed and encouraged the good work done by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Geneva.

41. The Director, Geneva Liaison Office, Division of Public Partnerships, United Nations Children's Fund agreed that national legislatures had a key role to play in addressing the impacts of climate change on children's rights, including the rights of girls and of other children disproportionately impacted by climate change. She emphasized that States had both national and transboundary responsibilities to protect children from the adverse effects of climate change and, in the event of climate harms, to ensure their access to remedy. Also under the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, businesses had a responsibility to ensure access to remedy. With regard to information on the impacts of climate change on children's rights, the UNICEF representative highlighted the work of the Human Rights Council and called for disaggregated data collection which would help identify persons, including children, women and indigenous peoples, who may be disproportionately affected by the adverse impacts of climate change. Finally, she called for increased multisectoral cooperation, the development of child-friendly educational materials on climate change, which would facilitate children's participation in climate processes, and the integration of human rights and children's rights throughout relevant monitoring and review mechanisms, including those at the UNFCCC.

42. The Rapporteur of the Committee on the Rights of the Child also emphasized the importance of ensuring meaningful participation by children in climate action. This could be done by establishing standing consultative committees at the local and national levels that included children in government decision-making processes. The rapporteur called on States to take further steps to meet their human rights obligations to children, including through improved reporting to the Committee with regard to climate issues. Civil society inputs to the reviews of periodic State party reports to the Committee could also address climate issues by drawing attention to the adequacy of States' individual contributions to international efforts to keep climate change to less than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and to the human rights impacts of their climate actions. For its part, the Committee could help hold States accountable for any climate-related human rights concerns raised during the review process by issuing relevant recommendations and asking questions about the State's efforts, for example to regulate businesses, and to monitor and respond to negative climate impacts. Similarly, States could use the universal periodic review process to ask each other questions and hold each other accountable for their climate and human rights commitments. Finally, in order to address the transboundary impacts of climate change and promote access to effective remedies, States could employ extraterritorial jurisdiction where appropriate.

43. Responding to a question about the role of social media in addressing climate change, the founder of the Green Hope Foundation stated that social media helped circumvent geographic boundaries, permitting the foundation to expand its activities globally. She also called for heightened awareness about the veracity of information posted on social networks. It was necessary to promote the responsible use of social media platforms to ensure the accurate transmission of information. She concluded the panel discussion by reiterating that children should be given a voice and be involved in the decision-making, agenda-setting and implementation for climate change action.

44. Closing the discussion, the moderator emphasized that collective efforts were needed to build capacity to protect the rights of children and future generations, and to ensure that all human rights were protected in the follow-up to and implementation of the Paris Agreement. While there were a number of challenges to mainstreaming children's rights in climate action, the panel discussion had revealed many good practices. She hoped that the forthcoming summary on the panel discussion and analytical study on climate change and the rights of the child would make additional concrete recommendations for the protection and fulfilment of children's rights through climate action.